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ABSTRACT

This practicum was designed to improve the social studies averages of eighth-grade learning disabled students by using direct instruction and small group interaction. A study skills course was developed after student and teacher surveys indicated the need and desire for the class. The course curriculum included outlining skills, multiple choice and true\false test preparedness, and organizational skill development. Analysis of the students' test scores after the 12-week class revealed that the averages in social studies rose thirteen points. Students reported they felt more confident in their test-taking abilities and displayed better organizational skills through the use of a table of contents for their notebooks. Teachers reported an increase in class participation during group discussions. (EH)

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ED 421 418

Acquisition and Application of Study Skills and Test Taking Strategies with Eighth Grade Learning Disabled Students Failing Social Studies

by
Kimberley Fatata-Hall
Cluster 80

A Practicum I Report Presented to the Ed.D Program
in Child and Youth Studies in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

SO 029 064

Kimberley
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1997

APPROVAL PAGE

This practicum took place as described.

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May 12, 1997

Date

This practicum report was submitted by Kimberley Fatata-Hall under the direction of the advisor listed below. It was submitted to the Ed D Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

Approved:

Date of Final Approval of Report

Jonathan Feinn, Ph.D. Advisor

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Table of Contents

Page

Acknowledgments iii

Abstract iv

Chapter I: Introduction 1
Description of Community 1
Writer's Work Setting 1
Writer's Role 2

Chapter II: Study of the Problem 4
Problem Statement 4
Problem Description 4
Problem Documentation 4
Causative Analysis 6
Relationship of the Problem to the Literature 8

Chapter III: Anticipated Outcomes and Evaluation Instruments 13
Goals and Expectations 13
Expected Outcomes 13
Measurement of Outcomes 13

Chapter IV: Solution Strategy 15
Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions 15
Report of Action Taken 17

Chapter V: Results 21
Results 21
Discussion 22
Recommendations 26
Dissemination 27

References 29

Appendices
A Teacher Survey 30
B Student Survey 33
C Channel One Outline Sheet 35
D Ending Survey 37
E Ending Interview 40

Tables
1 Social Studies Test Scores 22
2 Channel One Quizzes 23

Abstract

Acquisition and Application of Study Skills and Test taking Strategies with Eighth Grade Learning Disabled Students Failing Social Studies. Fatata-Hall, Kimberley M.,1997. Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Learning Disabilities/Study Skills/Test Taking Strategies/Special Education/Middle School

This practicum was designed to improve the social studies averages of eighth grade learning disabled students by using direct instruction and small group interaction. A study skills course was developed after student and teacher surveys indicated the need and desire for the class. The course curriculum included outlining skills, multiple choice, true/false test preparedness, and organizational skill development.

The writer taught the strategies daily in conjunction with the student's learning strategies class. The use of overheads, text book duplications, and outline sheets were key materials the writer integrated into the class. In addition, the students were given instruction on listening for key words in the teacher lecture and relaxation techniques to prepare for tests.

Analysis of the student's test scores after the twelve week class revealed that the averages in social studies rose thirteen points. The students reported that they felt more confident in their test taking abilities and displayed organizational skills through the use of a table of contents for their notebooks. The teachers reported an increase in class participation during group discussions.

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April 3, 1997

Kimberley Fatata-Hall

Chapter I: Introduction

Description of Community

The writer teaches in a rural middle school located twenty miles from a large resort area on the southeastern coast. The largest industry for the area is tourism. Over one million people visit the area during the year. The socio economic pattern of the community surrounding the school represents a wide diversity. Recently three modular home parks have been built and a professional golf course stadium is being designed three miles from the school. Three elementary feeder schools are located eight miles from a town of less than 25,000 people. The school district educates over 27,000 students and recently passed a one million dollar bond referendum to build nine new schools and improve the existing buildings. According to the school district's recent newsletter, the school has a 30% transient population and a 12% minority population.

Writer's Work Setting

The writer's school is a nationally recognized award winning middle school with grades six, seven, and eight housed in the one level structure. There are two teams at each grade level; each team includes a teacher for language arts, math, science and social studies. The teams are led by a team leader who is responsible for the agenda for each team meeting and for ordering supplies for the interdisciplinary units of study. The team leader also attends management meetings where school wide problems are discussed and solved.

The student population for the writer's middle school is 786. The students rotate on a block schedule every 120 minutes. Block scheduling is used to enhance the curriculum by providing additional time for the classes to explore each subject, and the

students attend their classes on alternating days. In addition to the four academic classes, the students attend two exploratory classes each day and rotate through these classes every nine weeks. The exploratory classes include art, band, computers, keyboarding, gym, chorus, home arts, and health. The students also meet daily with their advisor for the first twenty minutes of the school day. This advisor/advisee class is an informal gathering of 15 students who are randomly assigned to a teacher for the year. The "Homebase" class develops a community service project, views the daily school announcements over television, and competes in academic and athletic intermurals.

Writer's Role

The writer is a special education teacher of students with learning disabilities who works with both students and teacher teams at the eighth grade level. The writer spends her entire day in the regular classroom working collaboratively with the teacher and instructing students in the four core academic subjects. In addition, the writer also teaches a learning strategies class for one period a day for included learning disabled students. The class is mandatory for the learning disabled students at the eighth grade level. Currently there are 22 students who attend this class in lieu of an exploratory class. Some of the class activities include: assistance with homework and organizational skills, oral testing, and development of computer skills.

The writer also works closely with the academic teachers on the eighth grade level. On any given day the writer may coordinate the testing schedule for all eighth grade teachers to ensure that the students take no more than one test per day, modify the tests to provide the necessary accommodations for each student, and plan lessons during the daily

team meetings. The writer is responsible for all of the individual education plans for the 22 learning disabled students.

Chapter II: Study of the Problem

Problem Statement

The problem to be solved in this practicum was the problem of eighth grade learning disabled students failing social studies classes.

Problem Description

The eighth grade learning disabled students attend social studies classes. The social studies curriculum at the eighth grade level provides a rich and diverse study of the state's history from the 1400's to the present day. The learning disabled students were failing the tests despite the accommodations made by the mainstream and inclusion teachers. These accommodations included: providing instruction to students in both the full class grouping as well as in small groups assisted by the writer, modifying tests, and presenting class assignments orally and through choices of projects. The learning disabled students were given an oral review before each test as well as the option to have the test read orally. Students in the writer's setting are not given any time in which to prepare for tests during the school day and one possible explanation for the failing grades was that the students did not prepare adequately at home for the tests. It was also the writer's supposition that these students had never been taught test taking skills, therefore they were unable to demonstrate what they had learned in the course.

Problem Documentation

The writer's intention was to investigate how many students were failing the social studies tests. Grades for the social studies class included performance on tests covering curriculum content and weekly quizzes on a ten-minute commercial news show called Channel One which was broadcast to the school and seen daily by students in the social

studies classes. The students were expected to take notes during the news show to use on a weekly quiz as well as to receive extra credit. The writer used the teacher grade books which showed that the average test score of the learning disabled students was 60% for the tests. This was twenty points lower than the average non learning disabled student's test score of 80% for the class. The grades for the quizzes on Channel One showed that the learning disabled students had a thirty point discrepancy with 65% test average as compared to the non learning disabled students 95% test average. The Channel One grades counted as 10% of the final average in social studies.. Only ten of the learning disabled students who received inclusion services in the eighth grade consistently turned in their weekly notes for extra credit points.

To examine the problem of learning disabled students failing the social studies tests, the writer developed a survey for the two social studies teachers and the learning disabled students to ascertain the possible causes for student failure (Appendix A). The teachers completed the survey independently of each other during their individual planning time. The survey asked the teachers to respond to the questions of whether the learning disabled students were adequately prepared for the social studies tests and if they would support a study skills test taking strategies class. Both teachers felt that they provided adequate review for the tests in class, but the learning disabled students needed more preparation than the regular class could provide. Also the teachers indicated they would provide materials to be used as a review for a study skills class.

The twenty-two learning disabled students responded to the survey during their advisor/advisee class (Appendix B). The students reported that they had never taken a study skills class but the oral reading of the tests was helpful. When asked about their

study habits when preparing for a test, 90% of the students reported they studied alone in a quiet area and 35% studied with the radio on.

The results of the two surveys indicated that the teachers felt they did adequately prepare students for the tests but still the learning disabled students were failing. On reflection, the teachers noted that students did not ever participate in a study skills and test taking strategies class and thought one possibility for the failures was that students did not know how to take tests. Therefore, they were supportive of implementing a program to meet this need. The students' responses to the surveys also indicated they did not know how to properly prepare for tests and had never been taught study skills.

Causative Analysis

Several causes may contribute to the learning disabled students failing the social studies tests as indicated by the surveys. One cause may be factors relating to time. For some learning disabled students the time of day that a test is administered can affect performance. Sometimes teachers did not give adequate lead-time in preparing for a test. At times, students were expected to take more than one test in a day which can create considerable stress. Although every consideration is given to scheduling tests to ensure that the students are not taking more than one test a day, doubling up is sometimes necessary, especially before the end of the term when all eighth grade teachers give exams.

A second obstacle to poor test performance may relate to the learning disabled students' limited knowledge of test taking strategies and study skills to help them pass the test. A part of applying study skills strategies is proper organization of the materials

which are needed. After a spot check of the students' planners, it was found that nine out of the twenty-two students did not write down their assignments and test schedules in the agendas. Lack of preparation in daily class assignments may also contribute to unfamiliarity with the material being tested (Armbruster, Anderson and Ostertag, 1987). Students may also be deficient in test taking strategies (Scruggs and Marsing, 1987). The students may not have the necessary materials such as their book or board notes in which to prepare for the tests.

The third cause of students failing the social studies tests may relate to a negative attitude. Some may dislike the subject matter or current topics being studied in the class. This dislike may have led to inattentive behavior in the class when the teachers were lecturing. Another possible cause for a negative attitude may be that the students were discouraged about the their lack of progress, lack self confidence, and feel they are unable to pass a social studies test. In the student survey, the students responded that they felt there was a need for a study skills class and indicated that learning test taking strategies would help them pass social studies tests.

The fourth reason for the student test failure may relate to the test format which may be confusing for some learning disabled students. When scantron tests were used, the learning disabled students may have become confused when transferring their answers to the bubble sheet from the actual test. Some tests are also a combination of fill in the blank and short answer tests. The students may have also been experiencing problems recalling the answers without the visual clues that are provided in a multiple choice question or in a word bank. Some of the tests were commercially developed and accompanied the major

text. Teachers shared in the survey that they did not always teach every section in a chapter of a particular textbook, preferring instead to utilize outside resources.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

The common thread throughout the literature is that study skills and test taking strategies are a needed part of the curriculum but are seldom taught. Test taking skills and strategies are a way of helping students improve their test performance.

Scruggs and Marsing (1987) determined that students need a small group test taking class in order to improve their test scores. When students are taught in a large lecture group some individuals often miss the important points of the lecture, thus, students do not gain the skills needed to improve their test scores. Scruggs assigned students to small groups and provided instruction on specific word cues to listen for during the lecture. The findings indicated that the students receiving test taking strategies scored 50% higher on a post test than the control group.

The need for students to learn to attend to what is important during the regular class instruction can also be a problem in test taking. (Scruggs, Marsing 1978, and Rothman, Cohen, 1988). When students are given written work in class they can use their written notes to review before the test. When teachers lecture to the class they have no way of knowing if the students are attending to the lecture content and taking adequate notes. Similarly, students do not recognize the key words from the teacher lectures when seen again on the tests. Knowing what are the key words and being able to synthesize the oral information and apply this knowledge is where the heart of the problem lies. When learning disabled students were given a course on key word recognition for standardized

tests, their test scores rose from 40% correct on the pre test to 77% on the post test (Scruggs, Mastropieri, 1986).

Teaching organizational skills is also an important component of a study skills and test taking program. Being organized with the needed class materials, and writing down the homework and upcoming test dates leads to improved test scores according to Armbruster, Anderson and Ostertag, (1987). For learning disabled students, many of whom lack organizational skills, the task of studying for a test can be an overwhelming experience. Regular class teachers rated organizational skills of learning disabled students as poor on a survey. These students were also characterized as having poor time management skills (Zigmond, Kerr and Schaeffer, 1989).

The students' attitude before the test can also affect the score in a positive or negative way (Daniel, 1996). The problem is compounded by the students' need for success. With repeated failures, the students continue to feel that they are unable to pass any test and the cycle continues. When the students are not motivated to study for the tests, then little or no preparation will be done before the test. Test anxiety can be a factor in poor performance of students with learning disabilities and behavior disorders. Swanson (1996) indicated in a recent research study that disabled students who lack study skills have increased levels of anxiety when taking tests as measured by a test anxiety inventory. This inventory used a Likert type 4 point scale that yielded two subtest scores, one for worry and one for anxiety.

When preparing for a standardized test, cramming won't help (Daniel, 1996). Often students wait until the last minute and try and read the chapter and notes the night before the exam. Using a regularly prearranged time to study can help alleviate this problem.

Using test taking skills such as staying relaxed and being confident in your abilities are two ways to improve scores on standardized tests. One of the key elements in taking a test is to stay calm and relaxed. McNeely (1996) found that humor can play an important part in diffusing test anxiety. She reported that when a college instructor wore fuzzy slippers to the test class the students laughed, tension was released, and the students were ready then to take the exam. Likewise, when "fun" questions were inserted (how good is your instructor?) students put their anxieties aside, shook off their nervousness, and focused on the test questions.

When teaching test taking skills and study strategies, direct instruction is the preferred method, according to Benz, Fabian and Nelson, (1996). Direct instruction is the oral response required from the students after the instructor poses the question. Direct instruction requires mastery of small systematic steps before proceeding on to the next step. The learning disabled student often does not transfer the knowledge from one class to another, and the need for consistent instruction in remediating test taking deficiencies can best be addressed by the uniform direct instruction approach.

By using a video disk generated program to teach study skills for language arts and math to at-risk students, Murphy and Smith (1988) raised the test scores of eighth graders in Texas. The authors found the students to be much more enthusiastic after the completion of the eight week program. The students were given instruction on word processing and math computations and encouraged to learn at their own pace. By the end of the summer program the students outscored their ninth grade peers on the state minimal assessment test.

Students need to apply study skills and test taking strategies in all their classes.

Smith and Smith (1989) have found that study skill programs at the high school level should require two important components: "Acquire specific learning strategies in all component areas and choose and apply specific learning strategies wisely and independently". (Cited Benz p.1)

When study skills are taught as a separate course the students often cannot simulate the material from one class to another. This lack of carry-over has led Perrin and Coker (1986) to determine that teachers need a course in teaching study skills and test taking strategies at the preservice level. Unfortunately, most college curricula do not have a specific component for test taking and study skills strategies.

When Bangert-Drowns (1983) initiated a study of elementary school students they found that a class which specifically teaches test taking skills can raise a standardized achievement test score from the fiftieth to sixtieth percentile. The authors used direct instruction and small groups of students in classes to teach specific test taking strategies. They also found that classes held over a longer period of time increased test scores, drill and practice were less effective, and the effects of training are the same for elementary or secondary students. While this may be true for students being taught a specific course to achieve higher scores on standardized achievement tests, Scruggs, White and Bennion (1986) found that students in grades 4 to 6 benefited from a test taking class, but that younger students need training for a longer period of time to show test improvement.

When students with specific disabilities are considered in terms of teaching test taking skills and study strategies the results are similar. Scruggs and Mastropieri (1986) found that teaching a test taking skills class to behaviorally disordered children led to an eight point increase on standardized achievement tests. They felt this was enough to keep

some students from being placed in a special education program in settings where test scores were heavily weighted on placement decisions. The author cautions in a later study that there is difficulty in transferring the taught study skills to teacher made tests. Teachers need to conduct on-going evaluations to insure that what is being taught in the test taking classes is being utilized in the regular curriculum (Scruggs and Marsing, 1987).

The need for teaching test taking skills and study skills has been well documented in the literature. The literature presents a wide variety of different strategies that have been tried to remedy the problem of learning disabled students who lack study skills and fail tests. Several studies have documented the different ways to teach study skills and how to apply different strategies in helping students score higher on tests. The literature also reflects a basic need for test taking skills for all students, regardless of their disability. Although direct instruction is the preferred method for some researchers, others found that small group instruction or a computer generated program works best. Researchers also found that using humor when testing is an excellent way to relieve test anxiety with students. The teaching of study skills can be effective with an older group of students as well as for students at the primary level.

Chapter III: Anticipated Outcomes and Evaluation Instruments

Goals and Expectations

The goal of this practicum was to increase the test scores of eighth grade learning disabled students on social studies tests.

Expected Outcomes

The following outcomes were projected for this practicum.

1. Twelve of the twenty-two eighth grade learning disabled students will improve their test scores in social studies to a passing grade of 70%.

2. Twelve of the twenty-two learning disabled students in the eighth grade will increase their Channel One test scores to a passing grade of 70%.

3. Fifteen of the twenty-two learning disabled students will score a 3 or above on a questionnaire to demonstrate their confidence in note taking, test taking skills, and study strategies.

4. Twelve of the twenty-two learning disabled eighth grade students will respond to a teacher generated interview with a score of 3 out of 5 questions correct indicating their knowledge in test taking strategies.

Measurement of Outcomes

To measure outcome one, student scores on social studies tests following implementation of the study skills intervention were compared with earlier test performance. The results of published tests accompanying the textbooks, teacher generated tests and notebook tests covering the content of an entire unit of study were examined and tabulated. The results of the notebook tests were especially significant since students needed to use their notes and worksheets in order to pass the test. The higher test

scores suggest that the students' organizational skills had improved following implementation of the study skills class.

For the measurement of outcome one, improving the students' test scores in social studies tests was the actual test scores on the social studies tests. These tests were kept in the students' file and compared to the tests that the students took before the participation in the study skills class. These tests included the teacher generated and textbook tests that the students were given at the end of the school term and a notebook test that encompassed the entire unit of study. The notebook test was chosen because in order to pass the test, the students had to rely on the notes and worksheets kept for the unit of study. This test was used to show that the students' organizational skills had improved since beginning the study skills class.

Increasing the Channel One quiz score to 70% (outcome two) was measured by the weekly quizzes the students took in the regular class. The scores on each quiz were compared to the previous scores. Since the students were not handing in their notes previous to the study skills class, a chart was kept to determine if the students handed in their notes for each quiz thus receiving extra credit (Appendix C).

The writer developed a measurement for outcome number three, a Likert Scale, which was used to assess the confidence each student had for note taking and test strategies. The students were expected to respond with a score of three or above on the scale to show their self confidence in study skills. Using the Likert Scale enabled the students in the class to judge for themselves the effectiveness of the class.

To assess the students' knowledge of test taking and study skill strategies, the writer developed a measurement that was administered orally at the conclusion of the

twelve week class (Appendix E). This informal assessment was a limited sampling to determine whether students could recall and apply several strategies which could be helpful in their preparation for future tests.

Chapter IV: Solution Strategy

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The problem to be solved in this practicum was the problem of eighth grade learning disabled students failing social studies tests. Many strategies have been used to try and solve this problem. The literature reviewed revealed a wide variety of techniques to help students pass tests and develop study skills.

The common thread throughout the literature is that learning disabled students often lack study skills and test taking strategies because these skills have not been taught. When the students were given classes in study skills their test scores rose dramatically (Bangert-Downs, 1983, Scruggs, Mastropieri 1986). Teaching test taking skills were found to be an important part of the curriculum and need to be in place by the sixth grade to ensure adequate transfer to the regular class curriculum (Scruggs, White and Bennion, 1986). When elementary school students were taught test taking skills in order to raise achievement tests, performance increased but students did not apply the strategies in the regular class according to Hattie, Biggs and Purdie, (1996). To be effective, the study skills and test taking strategies need to be assimilated into the entire curriculum and repeated throughout the students' entire school career.

Using humor to diffuse test anxiety and discouraging cramming before the test were two ways to help alleviate test anxiety for students with learning disabilities. (Daniel, 1996, McNeely, 1996). By using humor, the students found a release before the test and could concentrate their energies on reading the test and applying their knowledge instead of wasting their energy worrying about test content. This is an important part of teaching test taking skills to students who do not normally test well. When students consistently fail

tests their self esteem is lowered and their attitude becomes negative. The negative attitude of learning disabled students is documented in the literature by Swanson (1996). Swanson found that a student's attitude can affect the test outcome in a positive or negative way and that a lack of study skills can increase test anxiety in learning disabled students.

The need for direct instruction in small groups instead of full class instruction is an important part of a study skills class according to Armbruster, Anderson and Ostertag (1987). When students were given a class in test taking skills using direct instruction, the students faired much better (Benz, 1996) in achieving higher test scores and organizational skills. When organizational skills and time management abilities were looked at, learning disabled students scored lower on a teacher rating scale (Zigmond, Kerr and Schaeffer, 1989).

Report of Action Taken

The writer taught a test taking study skills class of twenty-two students. The students in the class were all identified as learning or emotionally disabled and were part of the inclusion model for special education at the writer's school. The class make up was sixteen boys and six girls.

Initially, the class began with the ten minute Channel One show. The writer wrote the notes from the program on an overhead projector and the students copied these notes onto their Channel One form (Appendix C). This transparency was left on the eighth grade hall bulletin board for any student who was absent and for the teachers to use to develop the weekly quizzes. The students were then taught how to take notes and prepare for tests through direct instruction.

An audio tape was made of a typical teacher lecture. The students listened to the tape and took notes while the writer wrote the notes on the overhead. The students received instruction on how to identify the main points of the lecture and used these main points to complete an outline. This outline was then used as a review sheet when preparing for the tests. The writer was able to tape three lectures during the twelve week class.

The students in the learning strategies class also were taught how to identify the main phrases such as: "turn the page", "the test will cover" and " your assignment will be" that the teacher typically used when reviewing test content. These important words were the main focus of the social studies teacher's review for the upcoming tests in the class. The learning disabled students were not aware of these words and previously could not identify them as important. The writer attempted to use a direct instructional technique to cue the students when these words were spoken in the social studies class. The learning disabled students were also instructed that these words, when heard in the class, were key words to listen for and not to interrupt the teacher during test review.

As part of the study skills and test taking strategies class the students also learned to analyze the textbook and identify important passages as they were discussed in the regular social studies class. The writer met with the social studies teachers on a daily basis and through this communication was able to keep the study skills class one day ahead for the assignments from the book. The students were then given a photo copy of the pages from the text to be read and discussed in class the next day. Students were expected to identify the main idea for each paragraph and highlight it. The students then took this sheet with them to their class.

The study skills and test taking strategies class also focused on instructional techniques for note taking for reading assignments. The students listened to tapes of the chapter they were studying in their social studies classes, and the writer wrote the notes on a transparency using the overhead machine. Each lesson contained learning to abbreviate in order to take notes quickly and identify key concepts from the tape. These note taking skills were also important to the Channel One news show. Mnemonic strategies were also taught as part of the note taking instruction. The students were given instruction on committing names to memory by using familiar songs that were important to them. One student was a big fan of country music and used the titles to these songs to remember areas of battles for the Civil War.

To facilitate the eighth grade students increasing their test scores, test taking skills were also addressed. The instruction focused on strategies for taking different types of test formats including true/false, multiple choice, and essay. The daily study sheet reviewed skills such as identifying key words, answering questions which were familiar first and seeking cues within the questions when students were unsure of the correct answer.

To help with test anxiety, the students received instruction in relaxation techniques. Each day the students ended the study skills part of the class by using deep breathing exercises and focusing on pleasant thoughts. Before each test the students were given a quick review and a reminder to practice their deep breathing exercises before the test in class.

Students were also be instructed on the use of humor to relieve test anxiety. On each Channel One transparency the writer put a thought for the day, a riddle or a cartoon. The students would frequently copy the cartoon and use it as a mnemonic strategy when

taking the Channel One quizzes. Students were also encouraged to bring in their own cartoons or jokes to be included on the notes.

Chapter V: Results

Results

The problem was that eighth grade learning disabled students were failing social studies tests. The solution was to provide the students with study skills and test taking strategies to improve their social studies test scores.

The following outcomes were projected for this practicum:

1. Twelve of the twenty-two eighth grade learning disabled students will improve their test scores in social studies to a passing grade of 70%.

This outcome was met.

2. Twelve of the twenty-two learning disabled students in the eighth grade will increase their Channel One test scores to a passing grade of 70%.

This outcome was met.

3. Fifteen of the twenty-two learning disabled students will score a 3 or above on a Likert scale to demonstrate their confidence in note taking, test taking skills and study strategies.

This outcome was met.

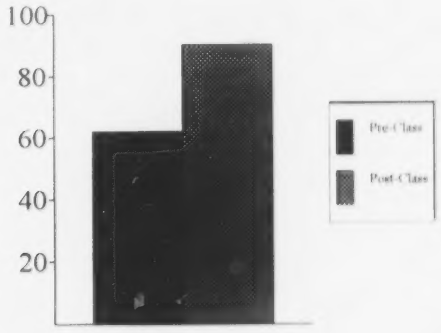
4. Twelve of the twenty-two learning disabled eighth grade students will respond to a teacher generated interview with a score of three or above indicating their knowledge of test taking strategies.

This outcome was met.

Discussion

The results of this practicum show that test taking and study skills are a needed component for passing the social studies class. The students in the learning strategies class all improved their social studies averages after a twelve week, fifteen minute a day study skills and test taking strategies class. An added bonus was that the students' behavior improved in the class and other students requested to join the class when their friends told them about the new curriculum.

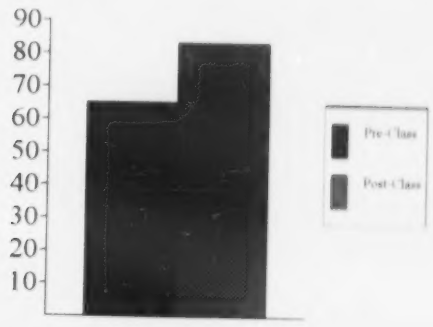
Eighteen of the twenty-two students in the class raised their test scores to 83% on the social studies tests.



Social Studies Test Scores

All of the students shared their test results with the class after each test. One student reported that when he took the test the questions sounded like his notes. Another student reported that when the test questions were matching items he was able to use strategies learned from the class and eliminate answers that were unwise choices.

Twenty of the twenty-two participants in the study skills class increased their Channel One test scores to a passing grade of 70% or higher. Notes taken by some of the students during the study skills class were used on the weekly Channel One quizzes resulting in a dramatic increase in test scores. Eighteen of the twenty-two students had an average of 90%. Teachers allowed extra credit when the weekly notes were handed in with each quiz.



Channel One Quizzes

Students were asked to evaluate their knowledge of study skills and test taking strategies by responding to questions regarding the class. A Likert Scale was developed to assess student perceptions of their study skills. Responses on the scale ranged from one to five. Eighteen of the twenty-two students responded at a three or above. The students were very positive in their comments and responded favorably to all the questions. Several students stated they felt they could now take notes from a teacher lecture and

remember the information for a test. All twenty students responded that the class should be taught for the entire eighth grade.

Twenty of the twenty-two students responded to the ending interview. The oral format enabled the students to discuss their answers with the writer. The results of the interview showed that the most popular test strategy among the students was the elimination of choices in a test question that were incorrect. Twenty of the students were able to develop a mnemonic strategy, and a spot check of the agendas showed all twenty students had their assignments written in for the week.

Teaching the main idea before the teacher lecture seemed to benefit the students in preparing for their class. The students reported that the social studies material was much less confusing if they went to the class knowing the topic before it was taught. One skill the learning disabled students found hard to master was listening for the key words in the teacher lecture (Scruggs, Marsing 1978, and Rothman, Cohen 1988). By pointing out the key words and topics ahead of time the students were able to attend to the lecture and kept their focus in the class. The social studies teachers reported that the students responded to the in-class lecture and helped other students with class work at a higher rate than before the study skills class.

The organizational skills taught during the study skills class showed the students the necessity of keeping their papers in order and developing a table of contents. The students were all able to pass their notebook test. The quarterly test is derived from

handout sheets received in the social studies class during the nine week period. When the test was announced the students did not have to scramble to find missing assignments.

The study skills and test taking strategies class used the direct instruction technique. This approach asks students to answer teacher initiated questions following instruction. This technique apparently helped students stay on task and reduced in-class conversation which was often a problem. The consistent and predictable class schedule helped the students to focus. Each day students participated in the following activities which were organized in the same order throughout the practicum implementation: Channel One, test taking strategies, teacher lecture, and textbook note taking.

Because the writer kept a detailed log recording her reflections and observations for each class several unanticipated outcomes were recorded. One unanticipated outcome was the addition of five non-disabled students who requested to participate in the class. This led to a question of who could come and how many would be allowed to attend, since the class could accommodate twenty-eight students. The non-learning disabled students also improved their social studies grades and their Channel One quiz grades. Their averages, when compared to the learning disabled students, rose to 88%. This outcome may be related to the students' ability to retain information for the tests.

Another unanticipated outcome was the loss of two students from the school because of severe behavior outbursts during the school day. The students were not able to control their behavior and after repeated mediations and additional testing one student was

placed in an after school alternative program and the other was hospitalized in a treatment program for adolescents. This led the other students in the class to question their abilities to learn in school. After much discussion, the services of the guidance department were needed to help the remaining students understand that some students find a full school day impossible to handle and succeed much better in an abbreviated day, small group class. The behavior of the remaining students improved after these two students left the school and the class continued with two other learning disabled students transferring in from different schools. These students benefited from part of the study skills class and were not included in the final tabulation of results.

This test taking strategies and study skills class was able to help a small number of students improve one academic area in a fifteen minute a day twelve week program. The results of the test taking study skills class is consistent with results reported in the literature. The class met for five days a week for three months and demonstrated that students can improve their overall averages and test scores in social studies.

Recommendations

1. The study skills and test taking strategies should be taught to all students at the middle school level. The twenty-two learning disabled students benefited from the class and improved their test scores, organizational skills, and averages in the academic area targeted.

2. The regular curriculum teachers should supply the students with a weekly agenda of what will be covered in the class. This would allow the students to adequately prepare for the class. Giving the learning disabled students a weekly planner helped the students prepare ahead of time the reading assignments and budget their study time. The students were then able to take an active part in class discussions

3. The technique of highlighting the material copied from the textbooks could be duplicated for other subject areas. This approach appeared to be the most successful for understanding difficult passages in the text. The other inclusion special education teachers could decide before their lessons which area to target with the corroboration of the regular class teachers.

4. The critical part of the test taking strategies, reading passages and answering questions pertaining to the material, should be taught just before state wide testing in April. This needed skill can be reviewed in all classes to help students prepare for the four day testing.

5. Since study skills are best taught in small group situations, the school might consider instituting a study skills curriculum during the Homebase twenty minute period. Homebase classes average only eighteen students which would be ideal for this curriculum.

Dissemination

The study skills and test taking strategies curriculum the writer used will be disseminated to the teachers at an inservice faculty meeting. The principal of the school has requested

that this inservice be done during the regular ninety minute Monday morning meeting. The writer hopes to put some of the sample lessons on overhead sheets or utilize a computer generated presentation program to allow the teachers to view the material as a group.

The writer will also meet with the guidance department and set up a schedule for the study skills to be taught during the Homebase period. The guidance department is responsible for the scheduling and curriculum for the Homebase classes, and they have expressed a desire to have the program in place before the new school year.

The eighth grade teachers have expressed an interest in the study skills class. The writer intends to disseminate the information gleaned from the report during the daily team meetings. The teachers may decide to teach specific skills to students who do not receive supportive help.

The school volunteer tutoring program could also benefit from the results of the report. These community tutors meet one day a week for one hour with students who are experiencing academic failures. The writer intends to make herself available to these tutors to help implement a test taking and study skills program.

Finally, the writer will present the findings to the special education personnel at the area cluster meeting. The attendance of fifty teachers from the seven area schools allows the teachers to share ideas, student information, and curriculum changes that can be implemented at different grade levels.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A

TEACHER SURVEY

TEACHER SURVEY

Please answer the following questions. Thank You for your time!!

1. Do you feel that the eighth grade learning disabled students are adequately prepared for your social studies tests?

2. What methods do you use to prepare all of the students before the tests?

3. Do you use commercial or teacher generated tests?

4. Do you think that oral testing is beneficial to the learning disabled students?

5. Would you support a study skills and test taking skills class for the eighth grade learning disabled students?

6. Are there any other concerns that you have about the learning disabled students in your class?

APPENDIX B

STUDENT SURVEY

Student Survey

Please answer the following questions. If you need more space feel free to use the back of the paper. Thank you!!

1. Have you ever participated in a study skills or test taking skills class?

2. Do you think that you are adequately prepared to take your social studies tests?

3. Do you study by yourself or with someone else for tests?

4. Do you study where it is quiet or with the radio on?

5. Do you think you need a study skills and test taking skills class?

APPENDIX C

CHANNEL ONE OUTLINE SHEET

Channel One Outline Sheet

Day _____

Main Topic

Story _____

_____ Place _____

_____ Numbers _____

_____

_____

_____

Second Story

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Pop Quiz

_____

_____

_____

_____ Follow up from previous

story _____ _____ _____

APPENDIX D

ENDING SURVEY

Ending Survey

Please answer the following questions. Put a mark on the line that will tell me how you feel about the question. A "1" means that you don't feel very strongly about the question (you don't agree with it) and a "5" means that you really agree with the question.

After taking part in the test taking and study skills class:

1. I feel confident that I can take Channel One notes during the Channel One broadcast.

1.....2.....3.....4.....5

2. I am now more confident that I can pass the Channel One tests because I am using my notes from the broadcast.

1.....2.....3.....4.....5

3. I am more confident about my ability to pass the social studies class now that I have taken part in the study skills class.

1.....2.....3.....4.....5

4. When I am told that I need to study for a social studies test I now know how to organize my materials.

1.....2.....3.....4.....5

5. Taking a social studies test is now easier because I feel I can prepare for the test as a result of this study skills class.

1.....2.....3.....4.....5

6. As a result of taking this study skills and test taking skills class I can review the social studies material and summarize the main points of the teacher lecture and text book.

1.....2.....3.....4.....5

7. I found this test taking and study skills class helpful to me when studying for other tests

1.....2.....3.....4.....5

8. I think that the study skills and test taking class should be taught to all the eighth grade students

1.....2.....3.....4.....5

APPENDIX E

ENDING INTERVIEW

Ending Interview

1. When taking a multiple choice test, and the answer is unclear to you, name one strategy that you will use to help you find the answer.

2. Name two key words to listen for when the teacher says "Let's review for the test."

3. What is a mnemonic strategy? Can you put together a mnemonic strategy for the names of your social studies, science and math teachers?

4. Name three abbreviations that you will use when taking notes during class.

5. On your agenda, how many assignments are written in for today?